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SUBMISSION TO THE BERGER COMMISSION
ON THE PROPOSED MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE

BY

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIANS

In the context of our Northern Study, we have been analysing the opportunities for Canadians. This embraces not only pipeline technologies, but also those associated with renewable resources and community development.

This study of technical gaps and opportunities in the North and for the North is yet to be completed. However, it is clearly a major concern that one of the significant pacing factors in the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project must be the maximum utilisation of Canadian and Canadian-controlled technical and industrial expertise. This factor is indeed an essential element of any social and economic assessment of such projects, even where restricted to regional considerations. In my view, Canadian technical capacities, and Canadian controlled technologies can be made to be more responsive to the needs and influences of the North than can those from Abroad.

All too frequently, the tide and mode and planning of such developments of national impact and magnitude are of such rapidity that an adequate Canadian technical base with its industrial complement, cannot be, or is not mobilised in time to seize the local and national opportunities that are generated. This technology base ranges from defensive and basic environmental research right through to system management, engineering and product design. The absence of adequate, authoritative and publicly available research clearly complicates the assessment activities such as are carried out by this Inquiry.

The absence of Canadian hardware development equally clearly reduces our technical and economic potential as a nation. This is even more true of the North. I will not elaborate upon this point. I feel it to be urgently necessary that in commenting upon the social impact of this proposed project, we stress the need to deliberately pace such projects so as to allow technical and commercial capacities in government, universities and Canadian companies (Canadian-owned companies), and at both national and regional levels, to participate to the maximum in the full range of technical tasks and opportunities involved. What we may sacrifice in time, we will undoubtedly gain in national and regional strength and expertise. The fruits of such Canadian-controlled, technology include a larger measure of freedom to serve the North to shape our own economy and to serve our own life styles. This is in essence the concept of technological sovereignty which we are beginning to perceive as an essential element of national development.

If and where we do import technology, and this will undoubtedly be both necessary and desirable in some cases, we must do so under terms which maximise benefits to the region and to all Canadians. This proposed project is too large, and has too wide an impact, to treat the technological and industrial opportunities lightly. We feel that, in terms of northern life-style, industrial opportunity and economic future, if Canadians take the major risks, they should be in a position to seize the major opportunities.